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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: JERUSALEM LOCAL PLANNING COMMITTEE ENDORSES
MUGHRABI GATE RAMP PLAN

REF: A. AMMAN 00536
[B](#). TEL AVIV 00171
[C](#). JERUSALEM 00089
[D](#). 2007 JERUSALEM 02199

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary. A Jerusalem Municipality official told PolOff the Local Planning Committee endorsed a plan for a new access ramp to the Mughrabi Gate that is shorter than the controversial ramp plan submitted in 2007. She said the Regional Planning Committee, which has decision-making authority on the ramp, will hold a hearing on May 20 to listen to opposition to the plan. Attorney Danny Seidemann said the Local Committee's outreach falls short of real cooperation, and that the Regional Committee's approval will open the door to construction of the ramp. Head of the Waqf Azzam al-Khatib said he is waiting for a UNESCO plan that appeals to Jews and Muslims, but he does not know when UNESCO will submit its plan. End Summary.

LOCAL PLANNING COMMITTEE ENDORSES NEW RAMP
PLAN, REGIONAL COMMITTEE APPROVAL PENDING

[2](#). (C) Ms. Osnat Post, Head of the Jerusalem Municipal Planning Division, told PolOff May 12 the Jerusalem Local Planning Committee endorsed a plan for the new Mughrabi Gate access ramp that is roughly 20 meters longer than the existing wooden ramp, but significantly shorter than plans that sparked an uproar in 2007 (ref D). She said the new ramp must be this long for security purposes and to be handicapped accessible. She said the new ramp will be built on columns designed to cause the least damage to antiquities at the site. She said the Local Committee made its decision after a May 11 hearing where committee members listened to opposition to the ramp plans.

[3](#). (C) Ms. Post told PolOff the Regional Planning Committee will hold a hearing on May 20 to consider opposition to the ramp plan. Ms. Post said the Regional Committee has final decision-making authority for the ramp, but the Local Committee acts as primary consultant. Jerusalem attorney Danny Seidemann told PolOff May 11 the Regional Committee already reviewed the ramp plans (ref C). He said Regional Committee approval after the May 20 hearing will open the way for construction of the ramp to begin.

LOCAL COMMITTEE HEARING CONSIDERS OPPOSITION TO NEW RAMP

[4](#). (C) PolOff attended the Jerusalem Local Planning Committee's May 11 hearing, chaired by Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Yehoshua Pollack. Approximately ten people representing different groups appealed to the Local Planning Committee to redraft existing blueprints, each with its own suggestion for the new ramp. Petitioners included left-wing Israeli groups,

ultra-Orthodox Jews, and at least three Arab or Palestinian groups.

¶5. (C) Ms. Post told PolOff the Local Committee hearing was not a mandatory part of the approval process, but Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski requested the hearing to demonstrate the Municipality's commitment to an open and transparent decision-making process. Seidemann called the hearing a "good sign", but added that he believed the Local Committee did not seriously consider the opposition, and that the hearing will help rubber stamp the Municipality's plan for the new ramp.

WAQF UNINVOLVED, AWAITING UNESCO PLAN

¶6. (C) Head of the Islamic Waqf Azzam al-Khatib told PolSpec May 11 he was unaware of the Local Committee hearing. He said the Waqf is waiting for a Jordanian-approved UNESCO plan that will consider both Jewish and Muslim concerns about the new ramp, but that he does not know when UNESCO will submit its plan. Al-Khatib said he does not want Waqf participation to legitimize Israeli actions surrounding the Mughrabi Gate ramp.

WALLES